

**Virginia Department of Health
Division of Dental Health**

Guidelines for a School Fluoride Mouthrinse Program

The purpose of the school fluoride mouthrinse program is to provide a safe and effective preventive method of reducing dental decay. This program is intended primarily for elementary school children who do not have access to optimal levels of fluoride. The benefit to teeth with a rinsing program is **topical** - the fluoride solution strengthens the outer layer of tooth enamel. Other examples of topically applied fluoride are toothpastes and dental office applications.

Program Support

A critical step in starting a fluoride mouthrinse program (FMP) is obtaining necessary local support. Community leaders in the school setting are most likely to help start a program. **Approval from the superintendent and local school board is required before a FMP is initiated.** A school health committee may be in existence, which could be another support group. Ideally obtain support from the local dental community and area physicians.

Once the school administration approves the FMP, an education program for principals, teachers, and parents needs to be scheduled. Allow adequate time for a dental professional to present clear information on the coordination of a FMP. The following topics are usually included in the presentation:

1. prevalence of dental decay in the community
2. role of topical and systemic fluorides in reducing decay
3. cost, funding, and materials required for a FMP
4. a demonstration of mixing and dispensing fluoride solution in cups
(some may want to sample rinse)
5. step-by-step instructions for rinsing procedure
6. provide information on the personnel needed at the school to supervise
the FMP and store mouthrinse supplies
7. provide educational materials for parents
8. discuss the need for parental consent and show sample consent forms
9. discuss which ages or grades need to participate
(k-8 are targeted populations due to the prevalence of tooth decay, however new
programs should begin with lower elementary grades first)
10. provide time for questions and answers